

## Intellectual Independence, Political Stagnation.

himself, sometimes opening the way for him, sometimes leaving him to open it for himself." Evidently, the author of "Emile" owed much to the author of the Essays. Montaigne was the apostle of intellectual progress by free self-development, untrammelled by tradition in religion, education, philosophy; and there was, after all, ample room for close affinity between him and his friend. Nevertheless, in politics he was staunchly conservative—a phenomenon illustrated in the case of other progressive thinkers besides Montaigne. "In public affairs there is no system so bad, provided it be of long standing and firmly established, that is not better than change and alteration. . . . It is very easy to accuse a government of imperfection, for all things human are full of it; it is very easy to beget in any people a contempt for ancient ordinances; no man ever yet attempted it but he succeeded. But to set up a better constitution in place of that which has been destroyed, very many have foundered who have undertaken it." This is a cautious, but it is essentially a lazy judgment, and the modern world has happily not followed Montaigne as its mentor in things political. Can't you • let it alone for fear of worse, is a poor political gospel for a world with so many wrongs to rectify, so many aspirations to satisfy. He was not in sympathy with either political or religious contention, for to him the principle of all this contention is wrong. People dispute from the spirit of contradiction rather than for the sake of truth. This is especially true of religious disputes, and to the red-hot controversialist of either side he would say, "Trouble not the world with your quarrels, especially not me, for you know little or nothing about the matter, and I would live in peace." There was no little common-sense in this view, and the warring theologians might have done well to pause in their rabid abuse of one another, and consider religion from a more philosophic point of view. Nevertheless, there was some measure of intellectual life, of the spirit of inquiry, even in these religious disputes, and, however much Montaigne might dislike the matter of them, he ought to have perceived the fact that this turmoil in the religious world might be at least the beginning of good by quickening the critical spirit, which was strong within himself. More especially ought he to have seen that the application of it to politics must have